THE

Elders and Messengers

OF THE

BAPTIST CHURCHES,

MEETING at *Aulcester*, *Birmingham*, *Bewd'ey*, *Bridgnorth*, *Leominster*, *Pershore*, *Tewkesbury*, *Upton*, and *Worcester*, (having received Letters also from the Churches at *Bengeworth*, *Bourton*, *Bromsgrove*, *Hookneiton*, *Middleton-cheney*, and *Sutton*,) met in ASSOCIATION at LEOMINSTER, *July* 28*th* and 29*th*, 1772, holding the Doctrines of *Three equal Persons in the Godhead*; *eternal and personal Election*; *Original Sin*; *particular Redemption*; *free Justification by the Righteousness of Christ*; *efficacious Grace in Regeneration*; and *the final Perseverance of the Saints*; To the Churches they represent, send christian Salutation.

Dearly beloved in Christ.

THIS is the highest, the most noble and lasting Relation we can claim. In this union with and in CHRIST, free grace shines most illustriously, in all the divine perfections; and probably the glory of this Communion will ever advance higher and higher, brighter and brighter. In this blessed connection we esteem you, and once more thus address you. But what shall we say unto you? For years past we have jointly and affectionately advised, exhorted, admonished, warned, and encouraged you. We continue to do these things among you, separately and statedly, in the course of our ministry, both in the house of God and in your own habitations. You are witnesses yourselves to this, and so is he that searcheth your hearts and ours: tho' we acknowledge and lament our manifold imperfections and deficiences. Shall we fear that our labour has been altogether in vain bestowed upon you? No: — We trust, we believe, we rejoice and are thankful that it has

has not been *in vain in the Lord.* Yet we are perſuaded, the moſt tender hearted and thriving among you are ready to complain and ſay, *Alas! we bluſh to think how barren we have been in the courts of the Lord's Houſe under all cultivaton. His love and mercy are boundleſs: elſe we had been cut down as provoking cumberers of the ground. He is pruning us with afflictive Exerciſes, yet does he water our root with bleſſed and ſeaſonable ſupplies of grace: the miniſtry of the word and ordinances doth often refreſh our Souls, and we live in hope and proſpect of eternal Glory.*

Dearly beloved Brethren: What greater happineſs can we deſire in this world than to be Inſtruments in the hand of God to promote your everlatting welfare! O pray for us! that we may live upon the treaſures of grace and glory laid up in JESUS CHRIST, our adorable Head. While we are admitted and kept near unto him, beholding, by faith, the matchleſs glory of his Perſon, and his boundleſs love, We cannot forget you, but earneſtly pray that you may have fellowſhip with us, when *our fellowſhip is indeed with the Father and with his Son,* JESUS CHRIST. Our petitions are, that your hearts may be in heaven, that your doubts and groundleſs fears be carried away into oblivion, your temptations vaniſh by the brightneſs of Chriſt giving you light, your teazing corruptions mortified by the bleſſed influence of his holy Spirit often preſenting to your view the glory of the upper world, and your title to it by free Grace only; that out of frequent weakneſs you may be made ſtrong in faith, giving glory to God. Theſe privileges will make you as *burning ſhining lights in the world,* will open your eyes to ſee and your hearts to underſtand *the things that are freely given you of God,* and ſo animate you to run ſwiftly in the ſtrait path and narrow way. Were the whole world to perſecute you, reproach you, attempt to allure and enſnare you, and all the powers of darkneſs beſet you; yet could all theſe but little affect you, while the Sun of righteouſneſs ſmiles upon you with engaging light and fructifying warmth.

As when we are near unto God ourſelves, it is our delight to pray for you; ſo when we are moſt ſpiritually minded, then are we beſt in our element while we *preach among you the unſearchable riches of Chriſt.* When we are comforted, we delight to comfort you. In ſhort, what we live upon ourſelves we are ready to impart unto you. We would not eat our morſel alone; but ever communicate what we receive. It would yield us inexpreſſible ſatisfaction to convey often unto you *rich cluſters of the heavenly grapes* to refreſh you in the wilderneſs; and be as the faithful ſpies, ever bringing a *good report of the land,* and *ſhewing* the *fruit* of it, aſſuring you, that it is *exceeding good,* conſtantly animating you to *go up at once to poſſeſs it.*

You ſee it is for your profit, as well as our own, that we earneſtly intreat your fervent prayers: and we are fully perſuaded the really religious part of our reſpective congregations help us much this way. As we, with all readineſs of mind, aſſiſt you by prayer

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ſtudy, and all our miniſtrations; ſo you, in kind return, greatly encourage us in our arduous work, by your ſteady *attendance* and cloſe *attention*. We know that trifles will not cauſe you to omit or neglect the ſeaſons to meet us in the houſe of GOD. By your very countenance we eaſily perceive you come *willingly* and not with *reluctance*. Your wakeful and fixed eyes teſtify how ready you be to hear and obſerve. Your humble, circumſpect and holy conduct gives proof that our *preaching* and your *hearing* is not loſt labour. Bleſſed be GOD for ſuch hearers. We do not wonder that the great Apoſtle doth ſo often mention his delight, conſtancy and fervency in prayer for ſuch; his readineſs to *impart unto* them, *not only the Goſpel of God, but* as it were *his very ſoul*, while he miniſtred unto them; nay, ſo devoted was he to their ſervice that he was content to be debarred for a time, of the bleſſed fruition and embraces of a dear Redeemer in glory, to be abſent for a ſeaſon, from him whom he ſo ardently loved: and not only ſo, but be ever expoſed to reproach and dangers, and all this in order to help on the Elect of GOD through the wilderneſs. We likewiſe would do any thing in our power for thoſe who bear the image of CHRIST. Theſe are the objects of divine love, the redeemed of the Lord, the ſubjects of his grace, and heirs of glory: *the light of the world, the ſalt of the earth*, and *the bleſſed of the Lord*. O Brethren! how happy your ſtate! Prize your priviliges; triumph in your lot; *walk as children of the light*. May the holy Spirit be your teacher and comforter; and the fulneſs of CHRIST and his love your chief portion, your meat, drink and clothing; then will you have ever at hand an antidote againſt all the poiſon of the preſent ſtate.

Shall we proceed? May we fill our epiſtle with this delightful ſubject, entertaining ourſelves with the very thoughts of your happineſs, as the children of GOD, ripening for glory? Muſt we wholly omit perſons of another character, and of a different caſt, who live among you, aſſociate with you, in your worſhipping aſſemblies, in your *families*, at your *tables*, and in your *beds*? We would greatly rejoice could we but certainly know that their number is very ſmall in the Churches. The Apoſtle, with tears of grief, complained, that *many* in thoſe days, under a profeſſion of Chriſtianity, were *the enemies of the croſs of Chriſt*, whoſe end would be *deſtruction*, as they *gloried in their ſhame* and *minded earthly things*. The Letters from the Churches and our own obſervation conſtrain us to fear, there are ſome of that complexion among our people. We are tenderly, tho' painfully, concerned for ſuch; and as a word this way may be ſerviceable unto them, we beg leave to addreſs them before we conclude? But we are at a loſs how to point them out. We have in view the Hypocrite, wherever he is. Theſe are the moſt miſerable perſons upon earth. They are certainly ſheltering themſeves under a profeſſion. They are ſo deceived

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by the *old Serpent*, they hardly underſtand or believe any religious truth aright. They *eſteem iron as ſtraw, and braſs as rotten wood; the arrow cannot make them flee; darts are counted as ſtubble*; they *laugh at the ſhaking of the ſword of the almighty God*. Yet we are ſtrictly commanded to *warn* them. We muſt not omit it. We cannot, and be clear of their blood. They are a people eaſily taken with the profits, pleaſures, diverſions, manners and company of this world: but often abſent from the houſe of GOD, and diverted by trifles from his worſhip and ſervice, ſome of them eſteem theſe trifles as more important than communion with GOD and fellowſhip with his people. When they engage in divine worſhip, they have no great reliſh or guſt for that entertainment. There are hypocrites of very different caſt: Some are deficient in the form and externals of Religion, yet very confident; others are punctual in performances, and there reſt. If we have none of theſe in our congregations we are exceeding happy; but certain we are, that there be too many who do not adorn their profeſſion as we could wiſh, they are much like the *Laodicean* Chriſtians. Thoſe thought themſelves worthy of a better character by far than what the ſearcher of their hearts was pleaſed to give them. Yet even to theſe our bleſſed LORD gave affectionate advice and counſel. --- Imitating ſo great a precedent, permit us to addreſs the moſt ſuſpicious part of our congregations. O Friends! What do you think of your own caſe? You have made a ſolemn profeſſion of love to GOD, faith in JESUS CHRIST, &c. Did you then ſpeak what you really thought and deſigned? or did you ſolemnly mock the moſt high to his face before ſo many witneſſes? Some of you have ſince forgot or deſpiſed your ſolemn admiſſion into the Church of CHRIST; you have reproached the Goſpel worſe by far than the prophane world. Think ſeriouſly of your preſent ſtate. Are you *carnally minded* or *ſpiritually minded? earthly minded* or *heavenly minded?* Do you know what vital religion means? Do you not meditate more upon *periſhing* than *durable* ſubjects? Are you not more in your element when engaged about the affairs of *time* than about thoſe of *eternity*? Does your conſcience tell you that you love GOD more than you do *many* of thoſe *fooliſh and hurtful luſts that drown men in deſtruction and perdition?* Do you ſtudy the bleſſed life of faith in a dear REDEEMER, or do you deſpiſe it? Is heart and life ſin your grief? Do you bewail it before GOD? Formerly hypocrites *diſfigured their faces* with pretenſions to grief and ſorrow before men; but there were hypocrites of another complexion in the days of the Apoſtle *Jude*; and ſo there be ſtill. *Out of the abundance of the heart* your *mouths ſpeak*. The world evidently hath your *tongues* and your *time*, and hath it not your *hearts, thoughts* and *affections*? The conduct is a kind of an infallible interpreter of the heart. Shall we be deemed cenſorious becauſe we preſume to touch your thoughts and affections? But is it any preſumption to

Judge

judge *the tree by its fruit*? Did our infallible Prophet give us a falſe rule? When *bramble berries* appear very evident, would it not be monſtruous in us to ſay of the tree that bears them, "*This is a rich vine or fig-tree?*" We are exceeding ſorry to ſee any *tares* among our *wheat*. O what ſhall we ſay unto you! It is hard to labour, to pray, ſtudy, and preach, when we fear the whole will be the *ſavor of death*. Yet *God forbid we ſhould ceaſe to pray for you*, ſtudy and preach unto you, while there is any hope. Tho' we thus ſpeak, yet your preſent and eternal happineſs we earneſtly wiſh. We long to ſee the *backſlider* return, thoſe who have *left their firſt love* made yet zealous for GOD, and ſuch as are *entangled* by any ſin ſet at liberty. We do not deſire to find one hypocrite among you, therefore we thus warn you. We would effectually alarm you. May the ſpirit of GOD accompany our aim with ſpecial energy, and take theſe hints home to the hearts of thoſe perſons they are deſigned for. Then they will ſoon imitate that great penitent, who ſaid "*I have ſinned againſt the Lord.*" Their confeſſion will be ſo open and their reformation ſo evident, that we ſhall be ſpared the painful addreſs, *Thou art the man*. But if their hearts are ſtill hardned, they will grow *worſe and worſe* the more we enlarge. They *ſpeak peace to themſelves* and they love to have others do ſo, 'till *ſudden* but *eternal deſtruction* come. The viſible church ever conſiſted of two parties, and very probably it is the caſe with our churches. If you be now thus mixt, you will be ſeperated, and a *great gulph* ſo *fixt* that you can be mingled no more. Give us leave then, while you ſit together as one body under our Miniſtry, to lay before you, in love and with concern, the following exhortations.

Conſider that the word of GOD is true,--- that there is a glorious fulneſs in CHRIST, there is no ſalvation but thro' him. There is in this life a powerful efficacious influence of the ſpirit, to convince of ſin, to reveal the glory of CHRIST, to draw effectually and ſavingly the heart from the world, and ſet it upon heaven and eternal glory. There is nearneſs to GOD here, and communion with him. There is more pleaſure and profit in his ſervice than in any other exerciſe or enjoyment. There are many on earth who have their *treaſure* and *heart in heaven*. They adorn the goſpel. They credit religion. They are preparing for heaven. They are travellers and pilgrims. They live upon free grace, and the *commandments* of GOD *are not grievous unto them*; but holineſs is their delight. Are not you living witneſſes to the truth of theſe things? We are afraid ſome of you call them in queſtion; Does the conſcience of any among you declare, that whether they be true or no, you are utter ſtrangers to them? As many of you as are acquainted with theſe bleſſed truths, be thankful and humble. Admire the grace of GOD to you. *Put on the armor of light*. Lean ever upon CHRIST, ſo ſhall you *come up out of the Wilderneſs*, hold on, and endure to the end. Remember that you cannot glorify your

heavenly

heavenly Father but by bearing much fruit: nor can you any other way grow in grace, comfort, and joy. If your faith in CHRIST increaſe, your affections will, in proportion, be *ſet on things above*. Your meekneſs, humbleneſs of mind, holineſs, obedience, patience, prudence, ſelf denial, and watchfulneſs will advance, as your faith, love, hope, and joy abound. But if any of you ſcruple the truth of what we ſay of chriſtian experience; take care you do not deceive yourſelves. Deny not what the Scripture ſo ſtrongly evinces; what ſo many have teſtified, in perſecutions, in dangers, in priſons, in the very fire, and even in death; and what the beſt men now upon earth know to be true. Permit us to declare ſolemnly unto you that your preſent ſentiments will not continue long. They muſt be changed, either by *amazing grace*, or by *endleſs woe*. We intreat you to beware leſt you be deceived now by ſin, leſt the world cheat you, and the Devil fatally blind you. May the ſpirit of GOD convince you, and may the great phyſician cure effectually your alarming diſeaſes. We had rather do any thing for you now than be *ſwift witneſſes* againſt you hereafter.

Finally, we beſeech every communicant, every one that bears the name of a member of the Church of CHRIST under our miniſterial care, to ſtudy much the peculiar and diſtinguiſhing doctrines of the goſpel. Be earneſt in the private part of religion. Retire often into yourſelves, take time to examine yourſelves in the preſence of him that ſearches your hearts, at whoſe judgement ſeat you muſt ſtand or fall for ever, and with whom there is no reſpect of perſons. Read your bible and pray. Do not frame excuſes to your inexpreſſible hurt. They never will ſtand the teſt. There is no thriving in religion without hard and heart conflicts. The moſt heavenly and ſpiritually minded have the greateſt trials, the ſharpeſt ſtruggles: but withal the greateſt ſupports and comforts, ſo they make the beſt progreſs. Prophets and Apoſtles ſpeak out this very plainly.--- We intreat Parents and maſters of families ſolemnly to conſider what the duties incumbent upon you, regarding Children and Servants. They are committed to your care. You are induſtrious to provide for them the *bread that periſheth*. O think of their immortal Souls! read the word of God to them, and put them to read it themſelves. Pray *with* them and *for* them. Take them to the public worſhip. Talk to them about the ſtate of their ſouls. Help them what you can. If the love of GOD dwell in your hearts, you will, *Abraham* like, teach and inſtruct your children and Servants, ſpeaking of ſomething uſeful and profitable in the houſe and in the field, according to the ſtrict command in *Deut.* vi. 6. &c. and xi. 18. We likewiſe beſeech young ones, obſerve your Duties and privileges. Be more forward to hear and obey than to ſpeak and contradict. O ſtudy to adorn the goſpel! Let it evidently appear that it pleaſed GOD to call you betimes by his grace, and that you are affectionate lovers and followers of a dear REDEEMER. How amiable it is to ſee every one in the family

mily ready to observe his place, and to bear his part chearfully in the worship of GOD! Now may *the God of all grace, who hath called you to his eternal glory by Jesus Christ, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen and settle you; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever.* Amen.

Signed in the name of the Assembly by the Moderator.

JOHN ASH.

BREVIATES.

THE new Meeting house being to be opened here the day preceding the *Association*, and having previous notice thereof, most of us met safely and comfortably on Monday evening.

Tuesday morning, at the opening of the new place of worship, the public service was begun by our brother *Ash*; and then a Sermon preached on the occasion by our brother *C. Evans* from *Hag.* ii. 7. *I will fill this house with glory, saith the Lord of hosts.* There was a publick meeting also in the afternoon, introduced by our brother *Turner*, and a Sermon preached by our brother *Francis*, from 1 *Kings* viii. 27. *But will God indeed dwell on the earth?*

In the evening of the same day, the Messengers of the Churches met, and after some time spent in prayer, our brother *Ash* was chosen Moderator. The Letters were read, wherein we found that the Churches are in peace, and have the means of grace plenty among them, and some signs of the divine blessing. Herein we would acknowledge the goodness of GOD. That meeting was closed by prayer.

We met Wednesday morning at six. When time was improved in prayer, the circular Letter drawn up by brother *Thomas*, was approv'd and sign'd. Other particulars proposed were seriously considered, and all the private Business of the Association concluded by prayer. At 10 the public meeting was opened by our brother *Wills*, a Sermon was preached by our brother *Skinner* from Acts xx. 21. *Testifying both to the* Jews *and also to the* Greeks *repentance towards God.*

God, and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ: and the morning exercise ended by our brother *Francis*. The afternoon service was begun by our brother *Hiller*, a Sermon preached by our brother *Turner*, from Acts xv 11. *But we believe, that thro' the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, we shall be saved even as they*; and the solemnity concluded by our brother *C. Evans*. There was a Sermon in the evening by our brother *Hiller*, from Rom. viii. 14. *For as many as are led by the spirit of God, they are the sons of God.*

The Church at *Sutton* sent us a friendly and respectful Letter, bidding us farewel, another Association being lately set up in the neighbourhood, to which it is more convenient for them to join. They conclude their Letter thus. "We thank you "for all the benefit we have received, by your "prayers and letters, of which the first that we know "of was dated, *Worcester, June, 3rd.* and *4th.* 1707, "now 65 years ago. We pray the Lord to be with "you and bless you, and make you eminent bless-"sings. May the Interest of CHRIST flourish under "your hands. Desiring a continued interest in your "prayers and affections, we subscribe ourselves,

your loving brethren in CHRIST."

The next Association to be at *Pershore*. To meet on Tuesday evening in the Whitsun-week. Our brethren *Beddome* and *Hiller* to preach. In case of failure of either, our brother *Wills*. Put up at the *Angel*.

The state of the associated Churches.

The ADDITION this year.	Baptized	38	
	Received by Letters	6	
			44
DIMUNITION	Dead	17	
	Dismissed	1	
			18
INCREASE			26

27 AP 66

LEOMINSTER, Printed by P. DAVIS.

92. i. 62